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REFLECTIONS ON TORONTO'S BELT LINE RAILWAY

(The following is a partial reprint of an article which appeared in the Toronto *Daily Star* recently which we thought would be interesting to pass on.)

The hum of saws, the chop of axe on wood sounds through Moore Park Ravine and the doughty woodsmen from the Parks Department are sparing no tree as they efface the last trace of Toronto's Belt Line railway.

Dead and gone these 50 years, the Belt Line between St. Clair Avenue East and Moore Avenue is but a skeletal remnant of days that used to be. A few rotting ties, a length or two of rail, are the sole remaining ribs of the City's outstanding financial folly - the project to circle Toronto with a railway which would serve the double function of bringing the suburbs closer to downtown and allow the city dwellers to visit such unspoiled country spots as Moore Park, Eglinton Avenue & Fairbank.

The trees that grace the short-lived railroads path are now being felled to make way for a 100 foot wide roadway and here and there the last few pheasants which have made their home within the city's boundaries are skittering away before the woodsmen.

Toronto's real estate boom of the ninety's plus brilliant imagination of Civic expansion conceived the Belt Line Railway with its 24 miles of track, 2 engines and 4 or 5 cars. It was in 1892 when the inaugural trip was made.

"It will lift toiling men and women for a little while at least, each day out of the grime and soot and smoke of the city," wrote its forgotten publicity man, "a cheap fare, a comfortable seat, a well heated, a well lighted & well ventilated car, a quick ride here on the highlands, away from the bustle of the throng and beyond the clatter of the streets, here the balmy air and restful surroundings will win back the bloom of the cheek and courage to the heart."

Fare between each station is five cents. The track was laid going east from the Union Station, along the bay front, north up the west side of the Don to a station a little north of the Danforth. From there it travelled through a part of Rosedale and Moore Park and through the ravine of the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, crossing Yonge Street at Merton Street and going behind Upper Canada College. At Bathurst the railway turned directly west to Fairbank and turned south through West Toronto and Parkdale and back to the Union Station. A more westerly loop gave the system the appearance of a figure eight which serviced Lambton, Jane Street, and the Lakeshore.

The highlands so highly spoken of is now the Hill district and in prophetic vein the company proclaimed "It will not be long until these hills are studded with stately homes; for search the wide world over, few fairer spots can be found whereon taste and wealth may rear palatial mansions.

The mansions are there but the prophet was not honoured. The railway folded after two and one half years of operation.

The Belt Line died. In the first World War most of the rails were rooted up and shipped to France. Toronto outgrew the steel band which encircled it, and now the last indignity as the roadbed is disappearing the invasion by the Parks Department employees.

(Editor's comment: The foregoing article completely fails to point out the fact that all of the Belt Line trackage is in regular use between Fairbank and Mount Pleasant Road. The only section actually abandoned of the true Belt Line is that part south-east from Mount Pleasant Road to the site of the old Canadian Northern Railway yards in the Don Valley. It is this section the article is really concerned with.)

#### T.T.C. SCRAPS TWO UNITS OF SNOW EQUIPMENT

In November, S-11, one of the 3 double-end sweepers inherited by the Toronto Transportation Commission from the Toronto Railway Company was scrapped after lying in Hillcrest yard for several months. This marks the first city sweeper scrapped in Toronto and breaks up an hitherto complete line of sweepers from S-1 to S-28.

In December, work was started in the junking of the old plough 7 of the old Metropolitan Division of the Toronto & York Radial Railways which was known as TP-7 under TTC ownership. The big double-end box cab plough has been virtually unused for the last several years, and was one of the main railfan attractions of Eglinton Division Yard. Scraper plough 2120 has proven adequate in keeping the North Yonge Railways open in winter storms.

The TTC has under consideration the purchase during 1947, of one or more double truck snow sweepers from the soon-to-be-abandoned Manhattan Lines of the Third Avenue Railway System of New York City. These sweepers are said to be in excellent condition, always having been stored inside, and are second hand from the Eastern Massachusetts Street Railway Company. If the TTC purchases them, it will be the first second hand equipment ever purchased, excluding the many cars inherited from the predecessor companies.

#### C.P.R. LEASIDE STATION OPENS

The new and modernistic suburban station which the CPR has been constructing for the past year at Leaside was opened this month. It is thoroughly modern throughout, with brick and stone construction with fluorescent lighting and modern interior appurtenances. Three large and powerful floodlights mounted on sturdy polished steel poles illuminate the station, grounds and adjoining tracks, doing away with the traditional platform lights. Much new excavation work has been done for the new easy approach for the driveway up to the station from Millwood Road. The old station building has been demolished.

#### L.E. & N. - G.R.R. NOTES

In a rear-end collision early December, small caboose number 5 of the LE&N was badly wrecked as passenger car 846 struck it while it was on the rear of a freight train. The caboose will be scrapped, but the steel passenger car, which suffered only minor damage, is being repaired.

Car 973 has been received by the road back from the Angus Shops with newly modernized interior. Features in the modernization being carried out are:

- (1) Seats in main compartment covered with green and black (striped) cloth fabric, and upholstery built up.
- (2) Seats in smoking compartment covered with matching green leather.
- (3) Seat backs fitted with chromium handles for reversing.
- (4) Floor covered with linoleum.
- (5) Entire interior finished in a new bright two-tone colour combination.